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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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(Background Information is published by the Study Department on the basis of the most recent reliable reports received about the situation of the Church in the so-called Iron Curtain countries.

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I.

PROBLEMS FOR THE CHURCH IN EASTERN GERMANY

(Notes from a well-informed correspondent)

1. Church-State relations and negotiations

The reason why there is at present a friendlier official atmosphere between the Church and the Deutsche Demokratische Republik authorities appears to be a genuinely political one. There are people who suggest that the authorities of the D.D.R. have deemed it advisable to strike milder notes for the moment, because they have been using and are using the names of Niemöller and some other members of the Bruderrat in their peace propaganda. As long as Niemöller can be used as a "progressive Christian", these people suggest, it will be convenient to speak relatively mildly to the Church. (It is perhaps a thought experiment worth-while doing to try and imagine what effect the visit of Niemöller to the U.S.A. would have on this situation.) As it is now, Niemöller, some of his Bruderrat friends and astonishingly enough Mr. Heinemann are being held up as "progressive Christians" before the "reactionary" ministers of the East Zone. Especially in Heinemann's case this fact is next to amusing, since only last summer the East Zone press raged against him as a war-monger in the service of the Americans.

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Superintendent Ringhandt who was imprisoned in Potsdam in the autumn and released before Christmas is working as usual in his parishes in Oderbruch. Some people think that he is the same old Ringhandt, but others feel that he has suffered mentally and that you can detect a greater nervousness in him now. Regarding the treatment in the prison, Ringhandt does not want to talk.

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It is interesting to note that the Roman Catholics are by and large in a better position than the Protestants. This is not shown so much in external acts of understanding as through a generally kinder governmental disposition. Nearly all the Catholic priests voted for the National Front at the elections on October 15th. Their head, the Bishop of Bautzen, had written them in advance, advising them to do so. Consequently many Roman Catholic Church members did not have any compunction about casting their ballot for the National Front. The Bishop of Bautzen is said to be a kind, but very flexible person. Whether or not he had orders from Rome, is an open question. It is interesting to note that at the same time a number of Roman Catholics are being tried in a neighbouring country. Several German Protestant leaders have the impression that the Roman Catholics in the East Zone are working, as they say, "on two levels" (in zwei Stockwerken).

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A few words on the top-level discussions. It is dangerous to ascribe too much importance to official pronouncements from Church leaders and leaders of the State. The life of the Church has little to do with this kind of official fencing. The Christian front line forces in Germany are to be found among Catechists in Oderbruch or youth group leaders among refugees in Bavaria, Württembergand Schleswig-Holstein.

These discussions started this way:

The Brandenburg Government: No more State allowances for the Brandenburg Church unless the Bishop moves from Berlin.
The Bishop: We can take no official decision until the Synod meets in February.
The State: Then the Synod had better meet sooner.
The Bishop: The Synod will meet when it has pleased the Synod to meet, namely, in February.
Some voices among the clergy: Let us not be stubborn.
Most voices: Let us not give in.
Final answer: The Brandenburg Church will discuss the recommendations of the State at its Synod in February.
Nearly immediate result: The State decides to release the part of the State allowances that was withheld a few months ago.
The general opinion among initiated people about the negotiations between Church and State in Brandenburg: much more friendly than the press has deemed it advisable to report.

* * *

"Tägliche Rundschau" of November 18th, 1950, gave the following view on the relation between the D.D.R. and the Church:

"First of all, it is the duty of the Church not to provoke artificial oppositions in relation to the State and the Constitution. There will be few difficulties if we endeavour to maintain a fruitful exchange of thought with the clergy, including their leaders, within our Republic.

"But, when a group of Protestant Church authorities, who not only are located in West Berlin, but who from there publicly promote the rearmament of our Western homeland, and also in a completely one-sided way cling to Western conceptions; and when such a group from West-Berlin organizes and carries through political and general disturbances in the German Democratic Republic, then it is the Government's duty to see to it that Church and political life can again continue side by side in a peaceful manner."

The latest communication between Dibelius and the Brandenburg Government is dated January 9th and is a summary of the discussions of the East Zone bishops about the situation of the Hilfswerk (German Interchurch Aid). With typical diplomacy one of the paragraphs there begins: "I have utilized the presence of the other bishops from the Landeskirchen of the D.D.R. to inform them about the whole question of Church relief". Special mention is made of the requisitioning of 80 tons of paper in Magdeburg and it is pointed out that the Church cannot afford to lose so much paper and would the Minister for Home Affairs please see to it that the paper is released as soon as possible. Bishop Dibelius says that he has heard that the Government has suspected that paper donated to the East Zone Churches had been used in improper ways. He adds that he has reason to assume that the suspicion which led to the requisitioning had now proved groundless.

2. Is Church relief still possible ?

It has become quite evident that the Volkssolidarität (Government relief body) is not able to take over the distribution of material and goods coming into Berlin addressed to the Hilfswerk (as the Government has suggested). As a general observation Church leaders feel that we are too inclined to regard all East Zone regulations as totalitarian decrees enforced to the minutest detail in every locality and at all costs. That is not so. For instance, even during the weeks of tension and uncertainty before Christmas a large consignment of herring from Sweden arrived in a northern port designated for the Hilfswerk. No obstacles whatsoever were put in the way and the herring is now being distributed all over the Zone.

But the concluding and conclusive agreement with the authorities is still pending. However, it is safe to say that all designated goods will be cleared without question, also all gifts for homes and institutions of the Church, further all consignments for "Church personalities". The only questionable point so far is

the unearmarked gifts. The authorities have declared that they intend to be co-distributors of such gifts. So far the matter has not been cleared.

The bishops at their consultation on relief questions in Berlin on January 10th objected to the suggestion that so-called free-donations could not be distributed without explicit consent and proposals for distribution from the Government.

A special question is paper. The Hilfswerk paper store (80 tons) in Magdeburg is still in the hands of the State and no one knows if and when the Church will be able to get it back. This places the Churches in a precarious situation as far as literature and weekly or monthly magazines are concerned. Church officials are snubbed when they try to get an explanation from the authorities about the "paper case".

3. D.D.R. policies

The two recent laws around which the attitude of the Government is crystallized are:

1) The law against friendship with the West, to use a blunt formulation. (Officially it is a law for the protection of peace.)

The law says that anyone who maintains official and unofficial links with the West can be arrested on D.D.R. territory as a traitor. This means an implicit denunciation of and threat against all Bonn officials, but also includes the possibility that anyone from the West (in the first place Germans, presumably) can be arrested while visiting the East Zone. Furthermore the law naturally means that East Germans with Western links should be especially watched.

2) The educational law which forbids children of citizens of the D.D.R. to attend school in the West.

The D.D.R. authorities have so far been very cautious in their use of these two regulations, as a matter of fact have seldom pressed them. Some people seem to think that the laws are there as a last resort in case some drastic action has to be taken.

* * *

Although there is official calm, the ideological tension still exists underneath it all. Proofs are isolated geographically but numerous. There is for instance the story about the young student in a university town who was fetched by the secret police for interrogation many nights in succession. The police wanted information about the activities and ideas of some colleagues of the young student. Towards the end of a gruelling fortnight the student having given no information was close to nervous exhaustion due to anxiety and lack of sleep. During one of the last interrogations the police threatened him with execution. The student did not speak. Then another man was brought into the room and they

were both placed against the wall. The student was told that if he did not give the information requested, the person at his side would be shot. The student did not speak. A shot rang and the unknown person slumped to the floor. The student was brought home again in the small hours of the night. Up to the present he has not been interrogated again. But his nervous system is seriously shaken and a friend of his has shared his vigil in his room during sleepless nights.

* * *

It is forbidden to send your children to the West, says the law. The Government has announced that students attending West Berlin schools will find it hard to get a professional job in the D.D.R. In compliance with this regulation foreign minister Dertinger of the D.D.R. recently brought his child from West Berlin and immediatly after this compliant and patriotic deed sent the child - to Western Germany. This is a good illustration of the ambiguity of the East Zone situation. You always have to keep one eye fixed upon brother Stalin, but it is not necessarily the most sincere of your eyes.

* * *

The leader (Vertrauensmann) of the Student Christian Fellowship (Studentengemeinde) at the teacher's training seminary in Berlin was dismissed from school some weeks ago when the new term started. The reasons here were political-ideological.

This Vertrauensmann belongs to a group of 17 students who had been summoned by the rector to answer the following questions:

1) Are you willing to affirm the ideals of and join the National Front ?
2) Are you prepared to accept all the legislation of the D.D.R.?
3) Are you prepared to fight with weapons for peace ?

Only one of these 17 students answered the three questions in the affirmative, one said both yes and no, 9 of them said "no" to all three, finally 16 of them were dismissed for the official reason that "they are not equal to the standards" (weil sie den gestellten Anforderungen nicht entsprechen). Only 11 of these students turned up for the interviews, the decision was taken about the others in their absence. The students were not given an opportunity to defend themselves and their answers and they were not given a certificate - which means that their time at the seminary is practically lost.

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As an illustration of how quickly the political machinery gets hold of students, at least superficially, let me quote some figures from the Faculty of Education of the university of Leipzig. Before Whitsuntide (1950) out of 600 students 80 were not members of the F.D.J. (Communist Youth Group). With the Pfingsttreffen (Whitsuntide rally) in view, the FDJ launched a campaign to have all non-members inside the party-ranks before Whitsuntide. At the time of the youth rally in Berlin, 16 students had still not joined the FDJ. After Whitsuntide a new campaign started. The non-members

were called by name at general faculty meetings. In order to strengthen the impact, the professors were also asked to make specific references to such non-members in class rooms. In the autumn of 1950 there were only 10 left, in January 1951, 4 of these escaped to the West, 3 joined the FDJ. Only 3 are still non-members. However, since they have just finished their studies and passed their political examinations with unsatisfactory results, they have been refused a permit to work in Saxony.

* * *

According to the creed of the FDJ, each member must be an active member. There is no passive membership.

The greatest difficulty for the not-so-convinced members of the FDJ is that they are often asked to carry on propaganda for the Government. They are sent out into the streets in groups of 2 or 3 with the assignment of asking people about their attitude to peace, unity and imperialism. Just before Christmas 1950 such methods were used for instance in the central railway station of Leipzig. There were some arrests as a result of these off-hand interviews. But the reaction of people in general was so violently negative that this particular activity was discontinued.

In Berlin the Government apparently hesitates to use such aggressive approaches. Berlin is still something of a show-window.

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All over the East Zone the political organisations, especially the FDJ are practising so-called self-criticism. One member of the Student Christian Fellowship reports from such a meeting that he was rebuked because he had tried to emphasize some good points with another person. That was not accepted. The criticism must be negative if it is going to be of any value. And it doesn't hurt if the "self-criticism" deals with others !

* * *

Reports from Rostock indicate that there have been some recent arrests of students, however not members of the Student Christian Fellowship. Some students have recently escaped to the West. The reason for the unrest at Rostock seems to be that the authorities suspect there is an underground movement working against the Government. A student who knew about this movement, the report says, but had not taken active part in it, was arrested some weeks ago.

In Leipzig a member of the Student Christian Fellowship has disappeared. He was either arrested or decided to leave. There is so far no news about him.

4. Political examinations

This is part of the question of D.D.R. policies. But important enough to have its own chapter.

It is now a law in the East Zone that all students immediately before their final examination also have to pass a political examination. The theological faculties are the latest to be hit

by this law, but they, too, have now reached the dead-line. There is apparently still room for more flexible interpretations of the rules, if the leader of the political examination so desires. For instance, the theological students in Leipzig had a political examination where only factual knowledge was demanded of them. At one point during the examination a question was asked, the answer of which would have been a matter of conscience for the student. The latter consequently said that he was not prepared to answer the question. The leader of the examination spoke up and said that the student was right and that they could pass on to the next question.

All applicants to the teachers' seminaries - naturally extremely important places as far as the new Government is concerned - have to go through a so-called "Gesinnungsprüfung", an examination determining their political views.

Before such political examinations or pre-seminary tests one is expected to have read Stalin, Lenin, Marx, Engels, the constitution of the D.D.R. and the writings of the present political prophet of the East Zone, Fred Oelszner. At several universities there is now a commission entrusted with the task of deciding whether or not a student approaching his final examination is worthy of working in the profession for which he has trained. This commission is called "Berufslenkungs-Kommission", commission for professional guidance. In Halle the commission consists mainly of FDJ students, in Leipzig it is composed of the whole faculty, representatives of the Government, the National Front, the labour unions and the FDJ.

Members of the Student Christian Fellowship have noticed that FDJ members at these political examinations are only examined for 2 or 3 minutes whereas a member of the Christian Fellowship is questioned at least 15 minutes. The students have to wait for hours on end before their turn comes, sometimes a whole day. If they get too low a mark, they are not given an opportunity to work in their profession. The fiancée of one of the Christian Fellowship members who had been trained as a teacher, got the final verdict "undurchsichtig", not clear enough, and was refused a permanent post in Saxony where she belongs.

* * *

A medical student in his final medical tests, had to take a political examination before being admitted. There were some 6 medical students in the interrogation.

The first question addressed to the student related to his attitude to pacifism. Would he please mention some representatives of pacifism? He said: Tolstoi. Why did he think so? Because Tolstoi had a Christian attitude of passive resistance to war. Could he mention some other pacifist? Yes, Gandhi. Gandhi's close connection with Buddhism and Christianity made him a pacifist. The verdict of the jury: "Your attitude is very typical of a certain form of society. You are an idealist. Could you

please tell us what dialectic materialism says about Gandhi?" The outcome of this part of the discussion was that Gandhi had arrived at his pacifism because he was a bourgeois drawing support and ideas from an Indian middle class group. Consequently pacifism is a bourgeois invention.

The next question was: "When did the October revolution occur?" Our poor student said: "1919". That was regarded as a very good proof of the decadence of Western culture.

The next question: "What is your attitude to war?" The answer: "I come from a Christian home. My whole up-bringing has led me to believe that no lasting solution can be achieved by violent methods." - "But if your country is attacked, what would you do? Would you not fight?" - "In the case constructed by you it would probably amount to suicide not to take up arms. Suicide is sin. Consequently as a Christian I can conceive of the possibility that in the case described by you I would help to defend my country with arms." - "Then I can at least call you a progressive Christian." Final verdict: "noch tragbar" (still bearable), mark 4. There are six grades, mark 1 is the highest. Ten per cent of the medical students involved did not pass their political examination.

Other questions asked during the interrogation: Korea, the Oder-Neisse peace border, Formosa. One women student was asked about the Oder-Neisse line, gave the official answer and got mark 2. As a reward she was not questioned any further. One who knew the girl well enough to know says that she did not believe in her answer for one moment. Another student answered the Formosa question in the proper way - clear aggression of the U.S.A., and was also rewarded a 2.

The students indicated that their difficulty as Christians was to answer the questions in such a way that their conscience "would not be hurt too much". Most of the students have taken the attitude that they must always wear a mask and, for the sake of their future and their families, always be prepared to give standard replies in which they do not believe but which are useful.

5. Life of the Church

A. Sundry items

According to one Church leader, the only slogan for the Church in the East Zone is or should be: Evangelize, evangelize. "They do not have the slightest idea what the Church is. They believe that they can bring her to silence by external measures. As long as they live in this belief, there is time for us to evangelize."

* * *

The Church in Berlin has a special obligation towards the Grenzgänger, the East-West commuters who are doing work in the Church. Their salaries are paid in East Zone money, but in West Berlin you do not get much when you change your East Zone money.

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The Moravian Centre at Herrnhut is not faring very well. The Government seems to be very strict in enforcing its rules on Herrnhut. The Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine has recently been asked to pay taxes retroactively covering part of the Nazi-time (from 1944) up to date. The reason is probably that the Brüdergemeine has always been very active in a religious-social sense and the State is probably looking for excuses to nationalize some of the social work of the Brüdergemeine.

* * *

In Bischofswerda 15 students were recently dismissed from the college, because the political authorities thought that they were "politisch untragbar", politically unacceptable. Nearly all of them are members of the new Student Christian Fellowship. The result is that the Fellowship cannot meet in the school, but holds its meetings somewhere else in the town.

* * *

B. Student Christian Fellowship

The Student Christian Fellowships (Studentengemeinden) of the East Zone are of course benefitting from the general calm on the Church-State front. On the other hand there are individual members of the Fellowship who are having a difficult time with the authorities. The whole structure of the Fellowship in the East Zone is slowly changing due to the fact that the new generations of students are automatically enrolled in the F.D.J. - or nearly automatically - because not to belong always entails a danger. In a short time most members of the Christian Fellowship will consequently also be members of the F.D.J. An increasing number of members will have to live in the tension between political demands and the central message of the Christian Fellowship.

However, it is very encouraging to note that the Bible study groups in practically all the university cities are drawing a large and constant number of students. In Halle and Leipzig 300 students regularly attend weekly Bible studies, in Jena 200 and in Dresden 150.

Another encouraging fact is that small Christian Fellowships have recently been formed in localities with colleges of one kind or another. For example, there is one such new group at Bischofswerda and one small one at Neustrelitz.

The student leader of the Student Christian Fellowships in the East Zone also feels that the general atmosphere in the previously not too hopeful Fellowships in Chemnitz and Zwickau is much better now.

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One of the student pastors in the East Zone is very outspoken and has already been warned by anonymous visitors that he ought to disappear. He answered these visitors that he knew the tricks of the political authorities and that he would continue his work. At present he is obviously partly protected by the fact that the

Government is using Niemöller as a progressive Christian and consequently hesitates to make frontal attacks against the Church. To the present calm has also contributed the fact that the student pastor read Barth's letter on the rearmament question at a public meeting. The powers-that-be seem to handle the pastor with gloves. Not long ago elections to the Student Council were to take place and the candidates were asked about questions like the Oder-Neisse line before they were accepted. The student pastor objected to this practice at the Art College where a great percentage of the students belong to the Christian Fellowship, and the elections there were held without previous political questioning. The result was that the Council now consists of one Roman Catholic and three Christian Fellowship members, but no organised Marxists. Political objections were raised against one of the Council members, a Christian Fellowship member. The students published the whole story in detail on the announcement board. The complaint was withdrawn. The Christian element at this particular school seems to be so compact that it has become opportune or well thought of to be friendly with the Christian point of view. The chairman of the general student assembly having had to retrace his steps in a particular question concluded by saying: "Well, after all I am a Christian too." - The student pastor has good contacts with party functionaries. They are all staunch supporters of Niemöller's anti-remilitarisation views.

6. Glimpses of East-zonal Christian thinking

There is a real danger for Christians in the East Zone to devide human existence in two very different areas: one area of fallen things and beings, of things and beings beyond recall as it seems, of things that do not fundamentally interest God unless at some later date they choose to be steered again towards and into the Kingdom. Another area, the realm of redemption, an area to which the faithful belong and within which they lead a rather hapless life, because the secular realm is always making it hard for them. German Christian students often neglect the physical needs. They smoke a great deal, they do not care very much about how much sleep they get, they eat more perfunctorily than absolutely necessary. It would of course be possible to buy some fruit instead of so many cigarettes, but that evidently does not occur to them. All this is an indication that unconsciously these young people in Berlin and the East Zone have come to feel that physical life is not so terribly important, is not at all important. It belongs in a sense to the same category as the totalitarian political structure surrounding them. Both expressions of life will eventually disappear, so why pay much attention to them? Underneath the surface movements of our souls, underneath the pronouncements to which the world judges us, roll the currents of very different subconscious reactions to a threatening and hostile surrounding. On the surface: the totality of Christ's power and claim. Subterraneously: dualism. - You find here young people who think they are facing powers of darkness and have decided that all they could do was to hibernate. They are inclined to believe that their situation is the only genuinely Christian situation. It was a sinister choice.

II.

RECENT EVENTS AND THE CHURCH IN CHINA

(A summary and interpretation of recent developments based on latest reports, prepared by a correspondent).

Letters continue to come (at least through last November) from the Peking area, from missionaries even of conservative hue testifying to a new spirit which has gripped youth and pervaded the atmosphere as a whole, stimulating even the churches. I quote one such letter here:

"Christians feel pride in the accomplishments of the new government and a desire to be loyal citizens, and maintain their Christian faith. Churches want to back constructive government programs, and contribute that second mile of spiritual help which they alone can give. Christian youth have joined summer survey teams which have gone into Mongolian mountains and nearby factories to bring back recommendations affecting livelihood and safety, to officials of whose desire to sacrifice their own comfort to lift the level of life for all they are convinced. Other Christians have been part of medical conferences, professional and labor group conferences, and also feel that something will be done about the plans they have helped to outline. ... Meditate on these remarks made casually by two Christians: one who is of the intelligentsia said, "At last we have a government which wants to govern". Another who comes from the country and does a humble Christian task said, "I can recall no period of my life when I was not living in the midst of war - until now". We are not living in Utopia, but we are living in an atmosphere of youthful vigor and hope. To many, that makes the lack of what we consider fundamental liberties seem less important".

This quotation could hardly be improved by comment. The writer is a senior missionary with no illusions about Communism. She is reporting the climate of opinion in her own (the Methodist) Church, in the vicinity of Peking. Inherent in the report are all the attractions which bind a large body of Christians, along with their non-Christian fellow countrymen, in spontaneous support of a Communist government.

This, however, is Peking, where the great plans are made, and the idealists live. The antithesis is provided by fragmentary reports from the rest of China. From Manchuria we hear of broken Japanese machinery being returned to factories whence it was looted in 1945 by the Russians. For this the Chinese must pay in grain out of an already starving land. In Central and South China confiscatory taxation continues to create famine and depression. Private schools are more and more completely falling under government control. The number of guerrilla fighters has apparently increased greatly, due to the desperate poverty of the peasants. Especially in South China direct police action tends more and more to replace the slower methods of infiltration and conversion. And of course the Christians who fall victim to these policies share the judgment of their neighbors about the nature of the government. There is practically no intellectual or political leadership for this hatred of Communism among the masses of people who are its victims. Of leadership the Communists have nearly a monopoly. The guerilla bands are kept together by common hunger and outlaw status. Rumor does duty for philosophy, politics and faith - that Chiang's armies are coming back, that the third world war has begun, or, among Christians, that Christ's second coming is the imminent solution of the present reign of the Beast.

This poses the dilemma of China, and of the Christian Church here. The war in Korea has undoubtedly driven the cleavage deeper. The anti-American (and indirectly anti- all Western lands) campaign leading to the departure of most American missionaries, the freezing of American funds, and the decision to investigate and observe with special care all institutions which receive support from abroad, is throwing most Christian schools, hospitals and service projects into Communist hands. So another point of contact and compromise between the two groups is being removed. However, it is important to realise that the Communist government is judged from within, not according to its foreign policy or world line-up, but according to what it offers to China. The moral issues are drawn in the minds of Christians primarily over internal plans and programs. The whole issue of international orientation is an issue sui generis only to those few intellectuals who have informed themselves on the issues and come to regard them as basic, and to the Communists themselves. For most Chinese, Christians included, an attitude toward international politics is a by-product of their attitude toward the Communists in their village or city. Otherwise expressed: international politics is a field in which the average Christian in China does not feel himself informed. He is therefore quite willing to accept the Communist version of the facts if there is some positive reason for doing so. He may even do so quite sincerely. Many of us missionaries have personal friends who have deeply disappointed us by their change in attitude and loss of objectivity during the past two years. All of this may help to explain why some of the signers of the anti-imperialist proclamation described below signed willingly, and why on the other side we see a mushroom growth of sects (often at the expense of the Church) whose covert political hope for their own village is expressed in international or religious terms.

What is the attitude of the Chinese Communists themselves, and of those who have made themselves at home in the Communist political atmosphere (including many Christians) toward their own country and Russia? The whole could probably best be formulated as follows: Within the limits of a Marx-Lenin-Stalinist faith and philosophy, the Chinese Communist leaders are certainly sincere and independent patriots devoted to realising their ideal of a strong China leading the peoples of the whole Far East toward 'liberation'. The strength of the Communist faith and philosophy must, however, be more carefully assessed than is the rule among Western rationalists who write on international affairs. The bonds which bind Russia and China together are mainly spiritual even today, but Chinese Communists do not necessarily see it in this light. To these men, the direction of history, determined by the movements of the forces of production, bringing the victory of the proletarian classes under the leadership of the Soviet Union, is a cold fact. Whether it favors their dreams for China or not, they feel they must adjust to it. Choice for the "imperialist capitalist" democratic free world would be in any case futile, since that world is doomed whatever its seeming strength. History has passed its judgment. Only within the framework of the "people's" revolution across the world can the creative resources be found to rebuild China. Friendship with the West would cut its nerve.

This conviction is only partly due to ignorance of the facts. It has been firmly grasped by men who know better and who have had to deny most of their heritage to fit its pattern. The inner struggles

of Dr. T.C. Chao are a case in point. It is a conviction of faith, an answer to national despair, the keystone of an ideological structure which fits together and seems to give meaning to life.

The events which have most directly affected the churches in China in the last six months have been first of all the publication of the "Christian Manifesto", and secondly, the intensified measures against foreigners, foreign funds, and foreign-supported institutions since the Chinese attack in Korea. A word about the former of these would set the stage best for understanding the problems which Christians are facing.

The "Christian Manifesto", published by a committee of sponsors in September, signed by several tens of thousands of Christians, and finally adopted as the official policy of the National Christian Council as an organisation in November, contains in summary the following provisions:-

I. Purpose

"It is our purpose in publishing the following statement to heighten our vigilance against imperialism, to make known the clear political stand of Christians in New China, to hasten the building of a Chinese Church whose affairs are managed by the Chinese themselves, and to indicate the responsibilities which should be taken up by Christians throughout the whole country in national reconstruction in New China".

II. The Task in General

"Christian churches and organisations in China give thorough-going support to the "Common Political Platform" (a combination provisional constitution and plan of action passed by a Communist-managed national assembly in Peking, summer 1949) and under the leadership of the government oppose imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, and take part in the effort to build an independent, democratic, peaceable, unified, prosperous and powerful New China".

III. Fundamental Aims

In summary: The Church must teach the evils of past imperialism, purge itself of the influences of imperialism, especially American imperialism, which is plotting to use the Church for its ends. The Church should "oppose war and uphold peace", and support the Government's land reform policy.

Through self-criticm, austerity measures, and thorough reform of itself, the Church should instil a "patriotic and democratic" spirit among its members and aim at self-reliance.

IV. Concrete Methods

1. The Church must work out concrete plans for "self-reliance and rejuvenation".

2. Emphasis on "a deeper understanding of the nature of Christianity itself, closer fellowship and unity among denominations, cultivation of better leadership, and reform in Church organisation.

3. Emphasis on "anti-imperialistic, anti-feudalistic and anti-bureaucratic-capitalistic education, together with such forms of service to the people as productive labor, the teaching of an understanding of the New Era, cultural and recrational activities, literacy education, medical and public health work, and care of children".

This proclamation is clearly political, and makes only a subordinate attempt to state the task of the churches in a way independent of Communist propaganda wording. It comes out of the ardent efforts of a group of left-wing Christians, notably connected with the Y.M.C.A. in China (and not directly with any denomination) headed by Dr. Y.T. Wu. Three of this group (Dr. Y.T. Wu, Miss Cora Deng of the Y.W.C.A., and Mr. Liu Liang Mo) are delegates for religion in the national People's Political Consultative Conference. Dr. T.C. Chao is the other Protestant. A draft of the above Manifesto was drawn up by these left-wing Christians and shown to the Government before it had been approved by any Christian group, although there was a fairly universal conviction among Christian leaders that some statement must be made to clarify the issues and remove misunderstandings. The Government approved the left-wing draft, and thereafter kept sharp watch on the discussion which proceeded on the basis of it. All changes in the text were henceforth suspect, even when they were of a purely theological nature. The absence of the authentic Christian foundation for the above statement is in some degree due to this. Dr. Y.T. Wu would not pass as a Christian in any confessional sense. His faith is rather a vague pantheism, linked with a political messianism which gives uncritical support to the Communist view of history. Despite this dilemma, however, negotiations went on, and at several points the Manifesto was "toned down" before it was issued. Many, however, whose names appear as sponsors were not in fact associated with the final draft.

The campaign for signatures which followed was of dubious character. Some names were published without the consent of the bearer. Political pressure was brought to bear on others. It was made clear that the Government regarded it as a test of loyalty among Christians. Many Christians in places of responsibility signed in order to protect their institutions. Many signed in order to cleanse themselves and their religion of the hampering stigma of foreign domination and identification with interests in the "imperialistic" world. To the Government this issue was primary; to the Christian it was secondary.

Many Christians held out despite all pressures. The bishops of the Anglican Communion in China issued a far sounder manifesto of their own, which probably better expressed what the churches as a whole would like to have said. It granted nothing to Communist politics and propaganda, although it clearly opposed all imperialism, feudalism and exploitation. Its central emphasis was also unmistakably the good news of God in Christ. There is recent word that the Anglican Church in China is being "reorganised", but no details are as yet available to the writer.

The fact remains, however, that a large number of Christians signed the "Christian Manifesto" sincerely and not under direct pressure. This group includes a small number of opportunists of shallow faith, and of more sincere left-wing Christians whose faith

is in fact largely political. But it includes a far larger number of Church leaders and ordinary members who do not consider that they have surrendered their faith, or betrayed their conscience through this proclamation. Their confusions and motivations may never all be unravelled by Western friends. But the following, among other reasons, are suggested for this action:-

(1) Patriotism - particularly, acceptance of the New Democracy (which does not necessarily imply accepting Communist materialist philosophy) as a régime which is building a new China, and which is governing on the whole honestly and effectively. The international orientation of this régime is taken, by many sincerely believed, as a corollary to its domestic policy.

(2) The reverse side of the above - resentment against previous foreign control in the churches through missionaries, and also in the social and economic life generally. This resentment was often only heightened by being unjustified - by the fact that the foreign professor was in fact able to think more acutely, and the foreign engineer could make the machine run which broke down under Chinese care. To a certain degree this Manifesto, and the session of the National Christian Council which made it official policy, is the self-assertion of Chinese Christians over against their missionary origins. The fact that no missionary was present at the N.C.C. meeting, that the procedure and literature was all in Chinese, made a great impression on many Christians. They regarded it as the counterpart in the Church of the political "liberation". From outside such a reaction seems a little absurd, when we consider that missionary forces and Chinese Christian leaders have been working for years toward the goal of a responsible and independent Church in China, and that the goal was being fulfilled before politics forced the issue. But - perhaps due to that pride we never quite are able to subdue? - the reaction against the West is real and profound in the Chinese Church. It has been forced to its bitter end with the denial of foreign funds. Perhaps the fellowship of the Holy Spirit has been served by this event after all!

(3) The feeling that the whole issue of international affairs is really not one on which a Christian should stake his conscience. A number of different feelings reach this conclusion. Most Chinese Christians are uninformed about politics in general. They are likely to be uncritical and indifferent to such matters and not to see any particular Christian relevance or responsibility in them. Signing such a manifesto is simply an adaptation to the new political power, which makes it more possible to pursue one's own work in peace. The same applies to using the vocabulary of the new order in the proper way. Behind this is also the non-objectivity of Chinese thinking. Personal relations and adjustments are far more important than adherence to an abstract truth in the sense of an accurate picture of the facts of the situation.

Finally, over against the failure of the Christian conscience, which we find expressed in the Manifesto, stands undoubted evidence that there is a revival and deepening of Christian faith and life among the very people who have signed. Among leftist Christians the conviction is growing that the one great contribution of Christians to the New China is precisely their faith, or more accurately, the God in Christ to whom they bear witness. Christian youth work and all other

activity, challenged and squeezed out elsewhere, is rediscovering its center in the Church. If a clear issue comes to the fore - one not complicated by political relativities - Christian leaders will not compromise their faith. Today the movement toward Christian unity is growing. The November meeting of the National Christian Council was the most inclusive ever held, and the Council's membership is still growing. The Council is, however, only an instrument of common life and work among the churches. Attempts to give it plenary legislative and executive power have gotten nowhere.

This picture sharply drawn in the last six months of Christianity in China is not, in the human sense, encouraging. It reflects the sins of the missionary movement - of pride and of neglect - and the sins of mission-sending countries, so that sincere Christians are thrown into confusion of mind and conscience and must grope for deeper understanding of their own faith. Yet perhaps this very confusion is God's opportunity. The humility, the searching of conscience, the rediscovery of prayer and of God's word in response to the challenge of Communism are themselves works of the Holy Spirit. God will bring confessions and martyrdom in His own time or, it may be, a taming of the Communist dragon.

III.

Synopsis of a Pamphlet by T.C. Chao

"RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN CHINA"

Published April 1950, No. 10 of the Religion and Life series, by Associated Press of China

(This English synopsis was prepared by Mr. Leonard Tomkinson who has recently returned from service in the Christian Literature Society, Shanghai. We publish it here for the light which it throws upon T.C. Chao's thought).

Introduction

Christianity began as a religion of suffering and so did not fear pain and difficulty, but it does not follow that this is always true of the Christian Church. When the leaders of the Church and the mass of its members become "dyed" by their evil environment and cease to be watchful, the body may become the enemy of Christianity. Happily, by God's grace, whenever the Church sinks to a very low ebb, prophets appear to recall it. This is a time of testing for the Church in China, and it is essential that it should be purified of all extraneous matter, either coming from outside the country or from within - the things that at present obscure its true witness. There is, therefore, a call to the whole Church to reform. Its survival depends on such reform.

Chapter I : The Church's Reform must be thorough and complete.

All but a tiny percentage of China's immense population are quite indifferent to the question of the survival or the ending of the Christian Church and, therefore, indifferent as to whether it reforms, but it is a burning question for the Church itself. Sincerity and emphasis on essentials is required. Christian leaders have great responsibility since they can do much to block such reform. Often the youth of the Church is keen on reform while the responsible leaders are indifferent.

Reform must be inclusive and complete or it is empty and vain. Criticism must begin with self-criticism. Reform in the Chinese Church is possible and so not to reform is sin. Church leaders must give frank answers to the questions of young people. Bulky baggage will not get through the narrow gate.

Chapter II : Five points which should be emphasised in the Church's Reform.

1. We must practise the Christian religion, transmute our faith into deeds. We must practise the ideal, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God", and make the fellowship of saints a reality.
2. Reform of the Church involves service in the New China. The New Government is genuinely concerned for the welfare of the whole people; this is necessary to obtain and maintain independence, democracy and peace - and a united and strong country. Their one lack is in the matter of belief in God, and as to that we cannot pass any final judgment, for theocratic explanations and practice are different- as is instanced by the two sons in Jesus's parable. "For this reason I am willing to study and strive to understand the new thought". There is certainly a great deal to the Government's programme we can wholeheartedly approve.
3. Though Church leaders should lead in reform, it is not just the function of a few leaders. This age cannot tolerate individual heroes. The Chinese Church of today has no use for a Martin Luther. What is called for is that the mass of Church members should proceed quietly along the right way.
4. Each denomination should proceed to reform itself. The problem today is more complicated than Luther's, for he was faced with one Church as the object of reform. We must avoid, too, that typical Western evil practice, namely, concentrating on trying to defend our sectional point of view - by quotations from the Bible, etc.
5. The unit of reform is each local congregation, but it is the whole of that congregation, not just a small group within it.

Chapter III : The Fundamental Principle of Reform - Slogan and Central Motive.

Luther's basic principle of reform was "Justification by Faith"; that does not meet the present situation in China; the basic principle for the Church in China must be "Fellowship through Love". The Lutheran Reformers emphasised the individual conscience and capitalists have exploited this, but they cannot be said to have been genuine worshippers of God. A society founded on love would solve all the

problems of the Church. Closer relations between Christian youth and older leaders is essential. If one claims that the ideal fellowship described is beyond human capacity, the answer is that as faith must be given by God, so must this loving fellowship.

Chapter IV : A Clean Sweep and Positive Reform.

Get rid of all the incidental by-products of Western culture that have accompanied the introduction of Christianity into China.

For the most part English and American missionaries have not themselves been deliberately and consciously instruments of imperialism. Not one amongst those whom the author has known personally has tried to induce him to harm China for the benefit of his own country. Yet it cannot be said there are none of the characteristics of imperialism and "compradorism" about the Church in China, and it is historical fact that "freedom of religion" was forced on the Manchu Government by foreign warships. Missionaries, too, have been too apt to give complete confidence to those really not of the highest character amongst Chinese Christians and to make them leaders; these have often given good ground for the charges of imperialism and compradorism. It is difficult for Chinese Christians today to distinguish Western accretions from the genuine core of Christianity, but it is very important to do so.

All superstition must be done away with, and all idols overthrown. It is suggested that all the distinguishing features of the various denominations should be regarded as idols.

The Church should do away with the differences between various schools of theology, for these tend to be hindrances to mutual love. Yet theology is important, since without it there would be lacking explanations to suit the age. God is absolute, but all thought about God is relative. As theology was able to adapt itself to the teaching of Copernicus and, later, to that of Darwin, so it should be able to adapt itself to new teaching today.

The Chinese Church must get rid of all bad customs and habits. These include leaving all expression to a very few - or authoritarianism, also other-world-ism, which makes Christians in this world like a blind man on a blind horse, and lack of intimacy between the pastor and church members.

The infusion of new blood into the body of Christian professional workers is important.

The strengthening of the corporate life of the Church is also very necessary. The Protestant Reformers substituted preaching for ritual, so that now commonly it is taken as the function of the minister to preach and that of the congregation to listen. Service of men and worship of God must now go hand in hand.

Too often men have been chosen for leadership because of their ability to swallow teachings whole. The essential training is that which comes from participation in the life of the Church and from

human life in general, not from spoon-feeding in the present type of theological seminary either at home or abroad.

There can be no independence without self-support. If there is a real fellowship founded on love, there will be no difficulty in congregations supporting pastors who are happy to share the same standard of life as the mass of their congregations.

Self-support and Church union are closely related. It is not credal differences that are the obstacle to unity, but rather dependence on others.

It is essential that the leaders of all the denominational churches should be alive to the demands of the times.

Conclusion

The path of reform will be difficult, so each and all must be prepared to make up in their bodies the measure of the suffering of Christ. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but let each esteem others better than themselves, every man looking not on his own things, but on the things of others. Let the mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus".

There is need immediately for some central piece of machinery that can speak for the whole country and promote reform, and it must have local branches all over the country. Finally, we need to seek to know together the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge.